

- Similar percentages (27% of stayers and 25% of school leavers) in this Tennessee sample were assessed as needing any alcohol or other drug (AOD) treatment based on DSM III-R criteria.
- The gap between need for and receipt of AOD treatment was large. Overall, at least 75% of stayers and 67% of young school leavers in Tennessee who needed AOD treatment had not received it. The same percentage of school leavers and stayers (67%) needed no AOD treatment. The same percentage both needed AOD treatment and had received it (5% stayers versus 6% school leavers). Both groups were equally likely to have received AOD treatment and no longer needed it; that is, may have recovered (1.5% school leavers versus 1.4% stayers). And, a similar percentage of stayers (27%) needed AOD treatment yet had never received any such treatment as among school leavers (25%).
- It is important to note that while the two groups did not differ in AOD treatment receipt and need, when alcohol treatment need alone was considered, a significantly higher percentage of stayers was assessed as needing such treatment (22%) compared with school leavers (17%).

Summary and Conclusions

- Poverty, unemployment, poor physical and mental health and disability were all associated with school leaving among young adults in Tennessee. Lack of health insurance and reduced access to health care services, coupled with relatively high utilization of more expensive services such as emergency room and inpatient services, also characterized school leavers ages 18-34.
- Multivariate analyses suggest that young school leavers were poorer, more likely to be male, more likely to be unemployed, and more likely to reside in nonmetropolitan areas of Tennessee than were stayers, when controlling for sex, race, age, and other factors. School leavers were also more likely to live in households with children or youth under 18 compared with their better-educated counterparts.
- School leavers aged 18 to 34 were much more likely to have had no health insurance and to have been Medicaid enrollees (prior to TennCare). They were also more likely to have reported fair or poor health or functional limitation or disability than stayers. Diagnosis with and treatment for cancer was a particularly high risk for this group. School leavers also reported more mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, compared to their better-educated peers. School leavers were more likely to report concern about parental alcohol and other drug abuse than others, and they were much more likely to use ERs and walk-in clinics for regular care than were stayers.
- While controlling for other variables, young school leavers ages 18-34 were less likely than stayers to have drunk alcoholic beverages in the past 12 months, yet they